

16. The face mask of Claim 9, in which the multicomponent fiber is a bicomponent meltblown.

23. *(withdrawn and hereby cancelled by this amendment if not already previously cancelled)* A method of preparing fibers containing particles of a ferroelectric material the method comprising:

destructuring the ferroelectric material in the presence of a liquid and a surfactant to give destructured particles, wherein the liquid is a solvent for the surfactant and the surfactant is adapted to stabilize the destructured particles against agglomeration;

forming a blend of the stabilized, destructured ferroelectric material particles and a thermoplastic polymer;

melting the blend of the stabilized, destructured ferroelectric material particles and a thermoplastic polymer; and

melt extruding the molten blend to form fibers;

in which the particles of a ferroelectric material are present at a level of from about 0.01 to about 50 percent by weight, based on the weight of the fiber.

50. A face mask comprising a nonwoven web of thermoplastic polymer fibers wherein said thermoplastic polymer fibers have ferroelectric material dispersed therein and further wherein said fibers have been exposed to an electric field in order to reorient the spontaneous polarization of the ferroelectric material.

55. The face mask of claim 50 wherein said ferroelectric material comprises from about 0.01% to about 50% by weight of said fibers.

56. The face mask of claim 55 wherein said thermoplastic polymer comprises a polyolefin.

57. The face mask material of claim 55 wherein said ferroelectric material comprises from about 0.1% to about 30% by weight of said fibers.

58. The face mask of claim 57 wherein said thermoplastic polymer comprises a propylene polymer.

59. The face mask of claim 57 wherein said ferroelectric material comprises a perovskite.

60. The face mask of claim 58 wherein said ferroelectric material comprises a perovskite.

61. The face mask of claim ~~59~~ 58 wherein said ferroelectric material is selected from the group consisting of barium titanate, lead titanate and solid solutions thereof.

62. The face mask of claim 50 wherein said ferroelectric material is selected from the group consisting of tungsten bronzes, bismuth oxides and pyrochlores.

63. The face mask of claim 57 wherein said fibers comprise a polyolefin and have a diameter between 0.1 and about 10 micrometers.

64. The face mask of claim 5 wherein said nonwoven web comprises a meltblown fiber web.

65. The face mask of claim 57 wherein said nonwoven web comprises a spunbond fiber web.

66. The face mask of claim 63 wherein said ferroelectric material has a longest dimension less than about 10 micrometers.

67. (new claim, *if not previously entered from the last amendment filed with a Response dated October 8, 2002*) A face mask comprising a nonwoven web of fibers comprising a polyolefin and from about 0.01 weight percent to about 50 weight percent of barium titanate particles based on the weight of the fibers, wherein said barium titanate particles comprise destructured barium titanate particles and wherein said fibers have been exposed to an electric field in order to reorient the spontaneous polarization of the barium titanate particles.

68. (new claim, *if not previously entered from the last amendment filed with a Response dated October 8, 2002*) The face mask of Claim 67 wherein said polyolefin is a polypropylene.

69. (new claim, *if not previously entered from the last amendment filed with a Response dated October 8, 2002*) The face mask of Claim 67 wherein said fibers comprise from about 0.5 weight percent to about 5 weight percent of barium titanate particles based on the weight of the fibers.

70. (new claim, *if not previously entered from the last amendment filed with a Response dated October 8, 2002*) The face mask of Claim 67 wherein said fibers further comprise a comprise a surfactant adapted to stabilize the barium titanate particles against agglomeration.

Remarks

Claims 50 and 55-66 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,001,299 to Kawabe et al. (hereinafter Kawabe) in view of Japanese Patent Abstract JP 63288216 to Oshida et al. (hereinafter Oshida). Claims 9 and 12-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawabe in view of Oshida as applied to Claims 50 and 55-66 and further in view of PCT Publication No. WO 96/13319 to Pike et al. Applicants respectfully disagree for at least the following reasons. Reconsideration of the rejected Claims 9, 12-16, 50 and 55-66 and consideration of new Claims 67-70 is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. In this response Applicants added new Claims 67-70 for the Examiner's consideration. Applicants submit that new Claims 67-70 are supported by the specification as originally filed and therefore, do not contain any new subject matter.

First of all, Applicants would like to point out that Kawabe is directed to a novel process and a novel apparatus for manufacturing electret articles not novel electret articles or novel electret materials. See, e.g., col. 1, lines 11-12; Figures 1-1 all of which are apparatuses or related to apparatuses, the Abstract which describes on a method of electret treatment and the Description of the Preferred Embodiments in its entirety. Applicants submit that Kawabe is not directed to novel articles or novel compositions and does not disclose novel electret materials or articles. Kawabe merely lists potential electret materials, articles and components of articles that may be used in conjunction